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GUIDES TO A SUCCESSFUL LONG-RANGE PROGRAM IN THE GREAT PLAINS

Acreage Allotments and Price Supports

The success of a long-range program in the Great Plains depends on the degree of acceptance and participation by local people who have a vital interest in the area. Little progress is likely to be made with the wind erosion problem until such time as affected producers recognize that the hazard will continue so long as over-all farming operations are unchanged. The desire for change must originate with producers themselves, and as this comes about progress will be made.

1. Relaxation of the Requirement that 90 Percent of the Wheat Acreage Allotment Must be Planted in Order to Maintain Wheat "Base Acreage"

The requirement that farmers plant 90 percent of their wheat acreage allotment in order to maintain wheat "base acreage" has been relaxed for the 1956 crop. The Department has announced that farmers will be regarded as having fully utilized their wheat allotment if at least 75 percent of the allotment is seeded.

It appears inadvisable to completely rescind the requirement that farmers plant the wheat acreage allotment in order to maintain wheat base acreage and at the same time, credit them with wheat history, without regard to the farmers' interest in growing wheat. Such action would freeze wheat acreage allotments into a rigid pattern, and thus ignore trends caused by competition of other crops, population shifts, and other economic factors. However, further adjustment could be made, if desirable, by providing that in areas where weather conditions are such that farmers would not normally seed wheat for harvest as grain, the entire farm wheat allotment for such year would be regarded as having been seeded for the production of wheat provided that the farmer notifies the local ASC Committee not later than the normal final date for seeding wheat in the county that he does not intend to seed wheat for that year because of unfavorable weather conditions.

2. Adjustment of Farm Wheat Acreage Allotments to Reflect Promotion of Soil Conserving Practices

State and county wheat acreage allotments are required to be established on the basis of the acreage seeded for the production of wheat during the 10 calendar years immediately preceding that in which the National allotment is determined. Provision is made for adjustment for diverted acreage, for abnormal weather conditions and for trends in acreage, and in the case of county allotments, for the promotion of soil conserving practices. With respect to the establishment of wheat acreage allotments for individual farms, the law provides some general principles

but leaves wide latitude for administrative discretion. Within the scope of existing legislation and in consideration of the five specific factors; past acreage of wheat, tillable acres, crop rotation practices, type of soil and typography, which are provided for their guidance, local ASC Committees can effect such adjustments in farm base acreages as will result in the establishment of equitable farm allotments.

Assuming that farmers develop and approve "Land Classification" in a county, the current wheat allotment program appears sufficiently flexible to generally meet the increasing problem connected with land use under drought conditions.

It is therefore concluded that no additional legislation is necessary at this time.

3. Adoption of Certain Wind Erosion Prevention Practices and Land Uses as a Condition of Eligibility for Price Support

It is our firm conviction that price support eligibility should not be conditioned upon the adoption of certain practices and land uses designed to assist in holding the land. A revision of the price support program to establish as a condition of price support that farmers must carry-out certain land use based on "land classification" would necessitate additional legislation. A revision of this type would constitute a significant change in price support and acreage control philosophy. It would materially reinforce governmental authority in land management and planning operations of individual farms and would represent a long step in the direction of farmer regimentation by economic coercion. Any program to withhold price support as a means of forcing land management changes cannot be sanctioned, even though such changes in themselves may have considerable merit. We believe this conforms with the Secretary's statement at Tucumcari, New Mexico, as indicated in the press release of April 28, 1955, that, "The Government must help, not dictate."

Approved:

/s/ Earl M. Hughes
Administrator, CSS

Date

8-31-55





